



# Washington State Department of Agriculture

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## **WSDA to help promote potatoes in Southeast Asia**

**OLYMPIA** – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) is joining the Oregon Department of Agriculture and potato commissions from both states on a trade mission to the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar later this month to promote the growing potato market in this part of the world.

“More than 30 percent of everything grown on Washington farms is exported overseas, making the export market critical for our state’s \$49 billion agriculture industry,” Director Bud Hover said. “Potatoes are among Washington’s top commodities, and while the countries we will visit provide market access to our growers, expanding those markets can lead to more opportunities and more jobs in our state’s agriculture sector.”

Washington’s potato industry was valued at \$700 million in 2012 and supports an estimated 23,000 jobs, while contributing \$4.6 billion annually to the state’s economy. Director Hover will join ODA Director Katy Coba and the Washington and Oregon potato commissions to promote the humble, but versatile, potato.

The Philippines is Washington’s fourth largest export market for agricultural products with those exports reaching \$521 million in 2012. In that same year, Washington exported \$80.2 million in food products to Vietnam and \$5.6 million in food products to Myanmar, which opened its markets to Washington food products in 2011.

“Washington is home to the highest yielding potato fields in the world and the quality potatoes our growers consistently produce are desired throughout many countries,” said Chris Voigt, executive director of the Washington State Potato Commission. “More than 90 percent of the nearly 10 billion pounds of potatoes grown in Washington each year will leave the state and somewhere around half of those will be shipped to international markets. We continue to see international exports play a larger role for our industry and we look forward to building upon that success with our trade mission.”

The trade mission will kick off in Manila on Tuesday, Oct. 28 with a seminar for local chefs focusing on new ways of preparing potatoes to help drive interest among local consumers. The delegates will hold similar seminars in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. In Myanmar, the trade mission will focus on exploring the region for a better sense of how Washington growers can best serve consumers in that country. The delegates will also visit with government officials to discuss market access issues, including tariffs.

The trade mission is being funded through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant intended to grow the market for specialty crops from Oregon and Washington.

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